

"WRESTLING WITH DESTINY," CBC BIOGRAPHY OF OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST DANIEL IGALI BROADCASTS ON MARCH 9, AT 7 P.M. EST, PST

Post-production is drawing to a close in Vancouver on a documentary profiling the life of Canadian Olympic champion Daniel Igali, **Wrestling With Destiny**. Produced by Gabriela Schonbach of Omni Film Productions Limited, the one-hour program is directed and co-produced by Toronto filmmaker Joel Gordon. The broadcast premiere of this intimate television portrait on CBC's *Life and Times* is Tuesday, March 9th, 2004 at 7 P.M.

Igali, one of the world's top freestyle wrestlers, is currently preparing for the upcoming 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. The unforgettable image of him kneeling down and kissing the Canadian flag after his gold medal match at the 2000 Sydney Olympics has become an icon in our sports history. Not a typical wrestling champion, Igali balances his explosive style on the mat with intelligence, sensitivity, and charisma. A graduate student at Simon Fraser University, he is also an esteemed motivational speaker, community leader, and advocate for amateur sport.

Nothing has ever come easily for Igali, who grew up in a remote Nigerian village amid poverty and disease. However, raised in the traditions of the Ijaw tribe, his early life was filled with spiritual richness. In Ijaw culture, wrestling is revered as a sport of near-religious importance. Ritualistic "talking drums" are used to coach and inspire wrestlers as they vie for honor and prestige. Today, as he nears the end of his wrestling career, Igali hopes to respond to the ancient drumbeat once again at the Olympics, and to proudly carry the Canadian flag after winning another gold medal.

In making **Wrestling With Destiny**, director Joel Gordon had to wrestle with adversity himself. While filming in Nigeria, he was hospitalized from a near-fatal case of malaria. He continued shooting Igali over the next two years at wrestling tournaments around the world. Although he tried to pitch the project independently, when Gordon met with Gabriela Schonbach, she was inspired by Igali's story and facilitated the film's completion at award-winning Omni Film Productions in Vancouver. The creative team also includes writer Chris Aikenhead, editor Rene Beland, and director of photography Todd Craddock. Michael Chechik is Executive Producer and Michael Claydon is the Commissioning Editor for CBC.

Wrestling with Destiny is a moving and insightful look into the life of a fascinating individual, a complex character who thrives on achieving the impossible.

"I've interviewed thousands of athletes but I've never met anybody like Igali. His story was so inspiring, but the way he told it was even more compelling."
-Gary Mason, Vancouver Sun

Wrestling with Destiny is produced by Omni Film Productions in association with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and with V-Formation Productions, with the participation of The Canadian Television Fund created by the Government of Canada and the Canadian cable industry, Telefilm Canada: Equity Investment Program, CTF: License Fee Program, and with the assistance of the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit and with the Province of British Columbia Film Incentive B.C.

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